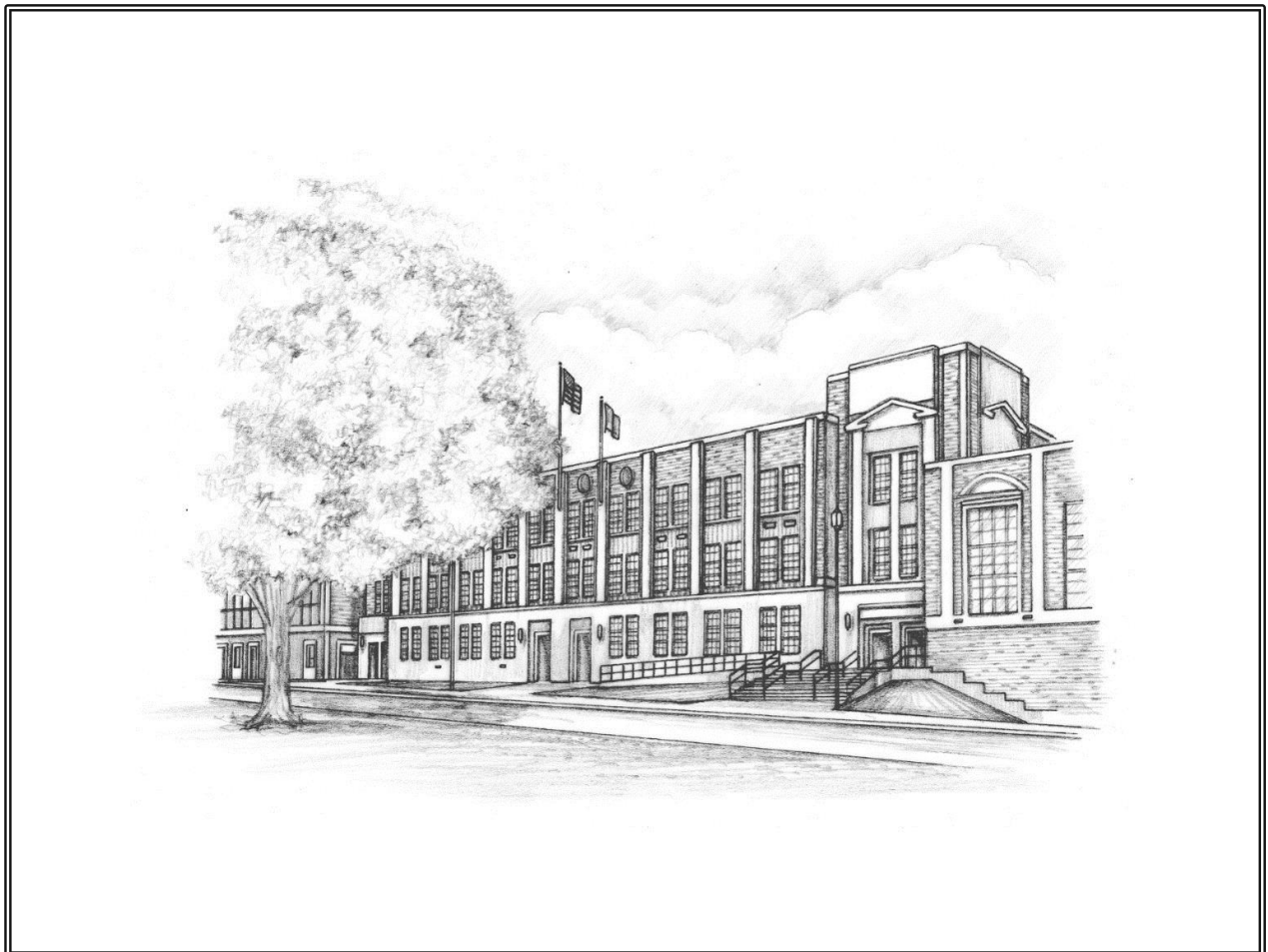# Utica City School District
Continuity of Learning Plan during School Closure

Introduction

On Monday, March 16, 2020, all schools in Oneida County were closed by the County Executive due to the spread of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic. Shortly thereafter, the Governor of the State of New York issued a series of *Executive Orders* extending school closures.

As a result, the Utica City School District implemented a continuity of learning plan that uses an integrated approach in order to provide students with ongoing remote learning opportunities that take into account their unique educational needs. The plan also considers and addresses any barriers that students may have with respect to on-line learning including technology and internet accessibility.

In addition, the Utica City School District adopted provisions for a temporary modified grading policy to ensure equity in education and outcomes based on the principles of empathy, compassion and fairness due to the significant hardships and uncertainty our students, parents and members of our school community may be facing during this unprecedented time.

We also understand the importance of communicating timely and accurate information to staff, parents and students. The school district has created a *COVID-19 Resource Page* on its web-site that contains a variety of important information and guidance for parents and students. Most recently, the UCSD TV YouTube Channel has been launched with a series of instructional videos and videos designed to uplift and support our students and families. The district will continue to post updates and communications on all school district media including the school district website, individual school building websites, the school district's Facebook page and Channel 3. The school district will also send automated calls when necessary via the School Messenger system.

Our plan is based on guidance from the United States Department of Education and the New York State Education Department and contains resources to help facilitate remote learning among our teachers, students and staff. The Utica City School District continues to monitor this very fluid situation daily and makes adjustments to its remote learning plan as necessary based on new guidance and information as it becomes available.

Important guidance and resources for educators from the New York State Education Department can be found by clicking on the following link: http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/continuity-learning

The emergence and spread of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has presented unprecedented challenges for our entire school community. It has also brought out a unique sense of purpose and creativity among our educators as they work to regularly contact students, promote successful remote learning sessions, and provide support and encouragement to those who may be having difficulties. This attitude, spirit and effort is to be commended. The district is appreciative of everyone's efforts to support one another as we navigate our way through these very difficult and uncertain times.

Continuity of Learning Plan Overview

The Utica City School District began planning for remote learning in advance of schools being closed on March 16, 2020. The execution of remote learning is an integrated approach designed to meet the unique needs of our students and to promote equity to the greatest extent possible during the school closure. The plan is inclusive of both technology and non-technology options. The district adopted the Google Classroom as the platform for delivering on-line learning experiences for students with access to the internet along with other district approved applications. Training in the Google Classroom for teachers and students was conducted before schools were closed. Teachers were also provided secure professional licenses for the use of *Buzz* for instructional video-conferencing with colleagues and students. Teachers were also provided with instructions on how to securely use Google Meets.

Since the school closure, our teachers have continued to make adjustments and refine their knowledge, skill and application of on-line learning by participating in webinars, conducting research, networking with their colleagues and seeking assistance from the cadre of Google Classroom experts at their school via teleconferencing and support sessions facilitated by building principals. Teachers are taking an integrated approach where they blend on-line applications with hard-copy instructions, lessons and assignments for students with different learning modalities. This includes the provision of instructional supports for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners.

Our principals and teachers worked together to identify and resolve any barriers that students and families may have as it pertains to on-line learning. This included identifying students who lacked computer technology or internet accessibility. In response, approximately 2,000 *Chromebooks* were issued to households in order to help facilitate on-line learning. Since the distribution of *Chromebooks*, over 94% of our students have access to on-line learning.

Teachers are working to support a very small percentage of students without internet accessibility by providing equitable standards-based hard-copy lessons and assignments that mirror what is being taught on-line. Teachers are also regularly communicating to monitor, assist and assess their progress as well as to help them with any questions they may have just as they would if they were with the student in their classroom. Teachers can then reassess in follow-up communications to make sure that students understand and were able to complete the assignments.

Teachers have been creative by offering interactive activities such as competitions, story time, virtual field trips, scavenger hunts, outdoor activities, authentic learning experiences, etc. in order to enhance student participation. Teachers are also embedding educational videos and tutorials in their on-line lessons. Teachers are also filming their own lessons and posting them for their students.

Remote learning is implemented under the direction and supervision of the building principal and aligned to the appropriate grade-level and content standards.

Recommended Time Allocations as Provided by the New York State Education Department

Expectations for students' at-home learning time should not exceed the recommendations listed below. Note that students' at-home learning time includes time spent learning new material, watching video lessons, participating in class discussions and completing assigned work and activities. Review and practice of new material learned is not included in this timeframe. Teachers should utilize judgment as to how much time should be spent in review of the new material being learned, depending on the learner(s).

- ➢ Grades K-2: 2.5 hours total per week for ELA and math, with an additional one hour per week for learning in other disciplines (3.5 hours per week total)

- ➢ Grades 3-5: 4 hours total per week for ELA and math, with an additional one hour per week for learning in other disciplines (5 hours per week total)

- ➢ Grades 6-8: 2 hours each per week for ELA, math, science and social studies, with an additional 2 hours per week for all other subject areas (10 hours per week total)

- ➢ Grades 9-12: 3 hours per week for each credit-bearing course (24 hours per week total)

The number of minutes for individual and group instruction for ELL students should try to follow current state guidelines depending on the level of each student. For co-taught classes, special education and general education teachers should be planning together in order to meet students' IEPs to the greatest extent possible. Resource room teachers should be delivering services to individual students and groups of students based on the new learning and each student's IEP to the greatest extent possible. Students in self-contained classrooms should be given instruction based on the guidelines above and based on individual students' IEPs to the greatest extent possible. Related service providers should meet students' IEPs to the greatest extent possible.

Additional Remote Learning Guidance for Teachers for the Continuity of Learning can be found at the following links:

http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/digital-content-resources

http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/educator-resources

http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/career-and-technical-education-teacher-resources

Utica City School District Board Approved Temporary Grading Policy Guidelines

The following modifications to the Utica City School District's grading policies and procedures are in effect for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year:

Temporary Grading Policy for Grades 6-12

1. All marking period grades prior to the COVID-19 school closure period will remain the same. Please note that Marking Period 3 grades were calculated based on student work completed up to the school closure on March 16, 2020. Teachers were instructed to ensure that students were not penalized for any work they were unable to complete or make up due to the unexpected school closure.

2. Marking Period 4 Progress Reports will be waived.

3. All Marking Period 4 grades will be calculated using a "Do no Harm" model taking into consideration the many variables that students and families are facing during this global health and economic crisis.

    - Grading during this marking period may be used at the teacher's discretion to improve the student's overall course average ONLY.
    - There should be no penalties assessed for late work or for students who were completing hard-copy assignments.
    - Teachers of Dual Credit courses will follow the guidelines for grading as established by the corresponding college issuing course credit.
    - A grade of *Incomplete* may not be issued.
    - For courses that do not issue numerical grades, descriptor comments will continue to be used.

4. In alignment with the New York State Education Department's cancellation of all New York State assessments and Regents Exams, local final examinations/post tests will not be administered.

5. The grade issued for Marking Period 4 will also serve as the 5th grade used in the calculation for the final course average.

6. Final course averages will continue to be calculated using five (5) grades.

Temporary Grading Policy for Grades K-5

1. All marking period grades prior to the COVID-19 school closure period will remain the same. Please note that Marking Period 3 grades were calculated based on student work completed up to the school closure on March 16, 2020. Teachers were instructed to ensure that students were not penalized for any work they were unable to complete or make up due to the unexpected school closure.

2. All Marking Period 4 grades will be recorded using a "Do no Harm" model taking into consideration the many variables that students and families are facing during this global health and economic crisis.

- Grading during this marking period may be used at the teacher's discretion to demonstrate similar or improved student performance ONLY.
- There should be no penalties assessed for late work or for students who were completing hard-copy assignments.
- A rating of NA (*Not Assessed* at this time) may not be issued.

3. In alignment with the New York State Education Department's cancellation of all New York State assessments and Regents Exams, local final examinations/post tests will not be administered.

These temporary provisions are designed to help accommodate for any adjustments needed to be made by teachers in order to best meet the needs of students during this period of remote learning.

Teacher Assistant Role During School Closure

Teacher assistants have the ability to play a vital role in providing support for our students during school closure as they work closely with students and are in tune to their unique and varying needs. Teacher assistants can provide support in the following ways:

➢ Communicate regularly with their classroom teacher(s) in order to maximize support for students during the extended school closure including discussion on any supports which may need to be provided to all students and/or individual students.

➢ Make regular contact with students to provide any academic support and/or assistance that may be needed.

➢ Collaborate and share the support/assistance provided to students with the classroom teacher on a regular basis.

➢ Inform the classroom teacher if a student needs immediate attention.

<u>Technology Support Plan for Students</u>:

A technology support plan was designed to assist teachers and students during the school closure. Key elements include:

➢ Creation of secure accounts for students and staff to utilize web-based platforms for on-line learning.

➢ Targeted training on the use of Google Classroom for all instructional staff members prior to school closure with turnkey sessions held with students.

➢ Establishment of a system for identifying students with technology and/or internet access barriers.

➢ Development of a plan to inventory, process and distribute *Chromebooks* for student use at home including the establishment and execution of a loaner agreement.

➢ Distribution of approximately 2,000 *Chromebooks* to identified households.

➢ Establishment of a technology help-line for parents and students to call for technical assistance. Technology hotline number: 315-368-6997

➢ Distribution of Charter Communications free Spectrum internet offer with contact information to all families in the school district.

➢ Distribution of "How to" guides for parents and students on how to use the Google Classroom were distributed and can be found at the following link:

https://www.uticaschools.org/cms/lib/NY01914004/Centricity/Domain/1651/googleclassroom.pdf

<u>WCNY Broadcast of Educational Content for Pre-K to 12th Grade</u>

WCNY has created the TV Classroom Network, a way to reach the many children in Central New York and beyond without internet access. The TV Classroom Network features teachers delivering instructional content that is broadcast on WCNY's Global Connect TV channel weekdays from 8 am - 5 pm, allowing children to continue to connect with real teachers and have the continuity of a classroom experience at home.

In addition to broadcasting the content, WCNY is live-streaming the instructional classes and also is publishing them for on-demand use at www.wcny.org/tvclassroom to allow students and their families across New York State access to the TV Classroom Network.

For more information, or to find out if your local PBS station is broadcasting segments of TV Classroom Network, please contact your local PBS station. To find your local station visit PBS Station Finder or the PBS Live Broadcasting page on NYSED's Continuity of Learning Website.
Families without internet access can access WCNY's Global Connect on the following channels: Antennae Channel 24.3, Spectrum Digital Channel 1276, FIOS Channel 467 and Channel 24.2 for *DirectTV*.

This educational programming will also be simulcast on WCNY.com, WCNY's Facebook page and via live stream on YouTube.

Support for Students with Disabilities

Our teachers and student support service providers are working to provide continuity and support to address the needs of our students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible during this unprecedented time. Students with Disabilities can be effectively supported in the following ways:

- ➤ Create appropriate, differentiated learning experiences for students. All educational materials should be developed and implemented in compliance with New York State standards and the students' IEP goals, as well as individual accommodations and modifications. Teachers should use a blended approach of on-line learning and hard copies of educational materials where appropriate. For Integrated Co-Teaching and Resource Room support the special education teacher will work in collaboration with the general education teacher.

- ➤ Maintain regular communication with students and families in order to provide support and feedback. Document all contacts with students and families during school closure and maintain concise records in their entirety.

- ➤ Utilize student records, including IEP's and evaluations, in order to create student-centered learning experiences that are differentiated and meet the needs of the individual student.

- ➤ Monitor and assess each student's progress towards IEP goals to the greatest extent possible. Develop and disseminate progress notes during grading intervals. Provide students and families with regular feedback on student progress.

- ➤ Collaborate with related service providers to provide targeted instruction that meets the student's IEP goals.

- ➤ Participate as a member of the CSE committee during meetings as scheduled by the Special Education Department through the school closure via teleconferencing.

Related Service Provision

Related Service Providers (*Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers and Psychologists*) provide educational programming and related services in alignment with students Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The most recent guidance from the New York State Education Department instructs school districts to provide special education and related services "to the greatest extent possible." Related service providers can accomplish this in the following ways:

➢ Maintain concise service provision records in their entirety throughout the school closure. Utilize the district established weekly service provision log to document service provision. Documentation will be used for the purposes of determining the need for compensatory services, as well as any additional CSE committee recommendations.

➢ Contact assigned students as per the frequency and duration indicated in the IEP and provide remote therapy to the greatest extent possible pursuant to guidance provided by the New York State Education Department and consistent with privacy interests. The weekly schedule for service provision should parallel the schedule that would be executed if on-site services were being provided. Additional information is available at the following link:

   http://www.op.nysed.gov/telepracticeguidance.html.

➢ Provide educational and therapeutic materials as needed to ensure the provision of services.

➢ Communicate with parents as it relates to the efficacy of conducting evaluations remotely. Ensure consent for extending timelines and/or deadlines.

➢ Participate as a member of the CSE committee during meetings as scheduled by the Special Education Department through the school closure via teleconferencing.

➢ Maintain report processing in accordance with established timelines.

➢ *For Social Workers*—collaborate with building staff to identify at-risk students who may need social emotional/mental health support. Provide therapeutic support as necessary. Facilitate referrals to community agencies when necessary.

➢ *For Psychologists*—collaborate with families to determine the efficacy and validity of completing a psycho-educational evaluation remotely. Conduct evaluations/re-evaluations to the greatest extent possible.

Federal and State guidance documents designed to assist administrators and teachers in the support for Special Education students are provided below along with links to each document:

USDOE Supplemental Fact Sheet Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities

> https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/rr/policyguidance/Supple%20Fact%20Sheet%203.21.20%20FINAL.pdf

Provision of Services to Students with Disabilities During Statewide School Closures Due to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak in New York State

> http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/2020-memos/nysed-covid-19-provision-of-services-to-swd-during-statewide-school-closure-3-27-20.pdf

Supplement #1 - Provision of Services to Students with Disabilities During Statewide School Closures Due to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak in New York State – Additional Questions and Answers (April 27, 2020)

> http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/2020-memos/special-education-supplement-1-covid-qa-memo-4-27-2020.pdf

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Guidance:

> https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/training/ferpa-and-virtual-learning-during-covid-19-webinar-recording

> FERPA & COVID-19 FAQs

> FERPA & Virtual Learning Resource List

Resources for Parents of Students with Disabilities:

> Parents: Supporting Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

> Time, Instructional Effectiveness, Engagement, and State Support (TIES) Center

Social Emotional Support Resources—Mental Health & Talking to Young People about COVID-19

> Resources for Mental Health and Talking to Young People About COVID-19 – NYSED

> Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent Resource - National Association of School Psychologists

[How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus](#) – The New York Times

[A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus](#) – National Child Traumatic Stress Network

[Addressing Grief](#) --Brief Facts and Tips

[Addressing Grief: Tips for Teachers and Administrators](#) – National Association of School Psychologists

[How can educators and families support students' mental health and social emotional needs?](#) - Institute of Education Sciences

Support for English Language Learners

Providing supports to our diverse population of English Language Learners is an integral part of the continuity of learning plan. The school district's academic coaches and translators are available for building principals and teachers to assist students and their families. The district actively participates as part of the state's English Language Learners workgroup designed to provide guidance and support for ENL. Teachers can support remote learning for English Language Learners in the following ways:

➢ Make staying connected with students a priority: Connecting via phone, text, Google Classroom, or live video on a routine basis is a priority.

➢ Draw on the expertise of colleagues. Connect and plan with content-area colleagues, co-teachers, ENL teachers, facilitators, social workers, guidance counselors, therapists, and bilingual coaches to develop lessons so all students can develop language skills.

➢ Provide standards-based lessons based on student proficiency levels addressing all language domains (reading, writing, listening and speaking) by providing scaffolds and differentiation to allow access to the curriculum.

➢ Embed supports such as glossaries, word banks, models, sentence starters, as well as clear and concise directions.

➢ Make learning visual. Use pre-recorded videos or live videos which incorporate tools such as PowerPoint, embedded instructional videos, sentence strips, items found around your home, whiteboards, etc.

➢ Provide positive feedback as well as suggestions to students on a regular and timely basis.

- Ensure accurate record-keeping of communication with students, families, lesson plans and work.

- Maintain communication with your principal and the ENL office to help address concerns about students who may need assistance, both academic and non-academic.

A comprehensive English Language Learner resource collection for educators can be found at the following link:

http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/bilingual-ed/resource-collection-for-ells-2020-04-29_1.pdf

The following web-sites provide additional resources for ENL students and their families during the school closure:

https://www.colorincolorado.org/distance-learning-ells

https://www.immigrantsrefugeesandschools.org/post/english-learner-family-engagement-during-coronavirus

Other Resources

https://www.uticaschools.org/

http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/guidance-continuity-learning

Guidance #3: Statewide School Closures - March 17, 2020

Guidance #2: Additional Guidance to Schools from NYSED - March 13, 2020

Guidance #1: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for P-12 Schools - March 9, 2020

http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/coronavirus/nysed-covid-19-memo-cancellation-june-2020-regents-exams.pdf